

**RECEIVED**

AUG 24 2000

CALFED Bay-Delta Program

**LARRY A. GILBERT**  
945 East Worthington Road  
IMPERIAL, CA 92251-9764

August 20, 2000

Mr. Steve Ritchie, Acting Executive Director  
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program  
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Final Programmatic EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Ritchie:

I am concerned that Cal-Fed's proposed program to divert water away from agriculture will not only reduce agricultural production and adversely affect the economy, but will also result in **a net loss to the environment**.

Water is used by cultivated plants to produce food and fiber, stimulate our economy, clean our atmosphere and enhance its oxygen content, and provide food and enhanced habitat for many species of birds and terrestrial animals (including game species). The channels and reservoirs conveying water to farms provide additional acres of water habitat for a wide variety of fish and other aquatic life, including birds. Agriculture areas include nutrient-rich habitats that range from arid to wetlands, from open to tree-covered, and from open space to urban.

Removing nearly a quarter million acres from agricultural uses can become part of a misguided trend toward converting habitat-rich farmland back into a comparative environmental wasteland, with only minor benefits to a few in-stream species. This would be a great tragedy.

No agricultural land should be retired from production without a thorough, comprehensive study which includes an analysis of the environmental benefits that would be **lost** by eliminating the agricultural use of the water.

Consider the Imperial-Coachella Valleys, where I farm. Water is diverted thru hundreds of miles of new waterways and tremendously enhances the environmental productivity of nearly a million acres into a species-rich environmental wonderland. Results include the production of more than a billion dollars worth of food and fiber products, a home for about 400 species of birds (a bird watchers' and hunters' paradise), and the most productive fishery in California.

California farms are capital intensive. They must have a reliable water supply to justify the large investments that make their efficiency the envy of the world. California needs a **more reliable** water supply for its farms, not more uncertainty about water rights and supply.

Cal-Fed is proposing a drastic move. Such a change must not be made unless and until a comprehensive and full analysis of anticipated results has been completed and fully disclosed to the public. Then a full opportunity for public review and time to comment must be provided.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Gilbert".

Larry A Gilbert

cc:    Senator Dianne Feinstein      Governor Gray Davis  
      Senator Barbara Boxer        State Senator Dave Kelley  
      Rep. Duncan Hunter          Assemblyman Jim Battin  
      I. C. Supervisor Dean Shores